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ACTION DRL-02

INFO	LOG-00	NP-00	AID-00	AMAD-00	ACQ-00	CIAE-00	SMEC-00
	INL-00	DINT-00	DOEE-00	DOTE-00	SRPP-00	DS-00	EAP-00
	EB-00	EUR-00	FAAE-00	FBIE-00	VC-00	H-01	TEDE-00
	INR-00	IO-00	LAB-01	L-00	VCE-00	MOFM-04	MOF-03
	AC-01	NSAE-00	OIC-02	OMB-01	OPIC-01	PA-00	PM-00
	PRS-00	ACE-00	P-00	SCT-00	SP-00	IRM-00	STR-00
	TRSE-00	USIE-00	PMB-00	DSCC-00	PRM-01	G-00	NFAT-00
	SAS-00	/017W					

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FM AMEMBASSY HANOI
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0881
INFO ASEAN COLLECTIVE
AMEMBASSY BEIJING
AMEMBASSY CANBERRA
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY SEOUL
AMEMBASSY TOKYO
NSC WASHDC
USMISSION GENEVA
SECDEF WASHDC
DIA WASHDC
USCINCPAC HONOLULU HI//J5/FPA/JTF-FA//

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 06 HANOI 002084

SIPDIS

STATE FOR DRL - KOH AND DRL/IRF - SEIPLE
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STATE ALSO FOR EAP/BCLTV, INR/EAP AND INR/B
NSC FOR HUSO
SECDEF ALSO FOR ISA/EA/LSTERN
CINCPAC ALSO FOR FPA

E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/29/10
TAGS: [PHUM KIRF](#) [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [VM](#) [HUMANR](#)
SUBJECT: VIETNAM'S DISSIDENTS: IRREPRESSIBLE IN FACE OF OFFICIAL HARASSMENT

REF: (A) HANOI 1671; (B) HANOI 1752

(U) CLASSIFIED BY POLCOUNS JAMES L. BRUNO. REASON:
1.5 (B) AND (D)

11. (C) BEGIN SUMMARY: MISSION OFFICERS RECENTLY CALLED ON SEVERAL LEADING DISSIDENTS TO ASCERTAIN THEIR SITUATIONS AS WELL AS THEIR VIEWS ON VIETNAM'S FUTURE. ALL REMAIN SUBJECT TO ONGOING OFFICIAL MONITORING AND HARASSMENT, ALBEIT UNEVENLY APPLIED. INTERESTINGLY, SECURITY AUTHORITIES, IN MOST CASES, APPEAR TO HONOR A PROVISION OF LAW THAT REQUIRES POLICE TO TERMINATE AN INVESTIGATION IF FORMAL CHARGES ARE NOT BROUGHT WITHIN TWELVE MONTHS. AN EXCEPTION IS THE CASE OF DR. NGUYEN DAN QUE, WHO REFUSED TO LEAVE VIETNAM FOR THE U.S. AFTER HIS RELEASE FROM PRISON IN 1998. ALL THE DISSIDENTS WE CONTACTED, AS WELL AS OTHERS WE HAVE NOT YET CONTACTED, APPEAR TO REMAIN COMMITTED TO CONTINUING THEIR OUTSPOKEN CRITICISM OF THE REGIME, MAINLY THROUGH ESSAYS WHICH EVENTUALLY FIND THEIR WAY INTO THE INTERNET. ALL HAVE BEEN SUPPORTED BY FOREIGN HUMAN RIGHTS AND PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATIONS. THERE IS AN ACTIVE

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DISSIDENT NETWORK WHICH SECURITY PERSONNEL HAVE BEEN UNABLE TO CURTAIL, LARGELY BECAUSE INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY, PARTICULARLY CELL PHONES, FAX AND ARE INCLUDED IN THIS YEAR'S OFFICIAL AMNESTIES. HANOI'S TREATMENT OF DISSIDENTS TODAY STANDS IN SHARP CONTRAST WITH THAT OF A FEW YEARS AGO, WHEN A LONG JAIL SENTENCE WAS A VIRTUAL CERTAINTY. THE SRV'S TREATMENT COMPARES SOMEWHAT FAVORABLY WITH SOME OTHER COUNTRIES, NOTABLY CHINA. IT IS VERY DIFFICULT TO GAUGE WHAT KIND OF FOLLOWINGS OUTSPOKEN DISSIDENTS MAY HAVE IN THIS POLITICALLY THWARTED SOCIETY. IT IS NOTEWORTHY THAT MOST DISSIDENTS ARE WELL INTO MIDDLE AGE OR OLDER, A SIGN THAT COMPLACENCY OR FEAR, OR A COMBINATION THEREOF, MAY CAUSE VIETNAM'S YOUTH TO HOLD THEIR TONGUES. IT WILL BE INTERESTING TO OBSERVE WHETHER, IN THE FACE OF THE SOCIAL CHANGES THAT ACCOMPANY VIETNAM'S ECONOMIC GROWTH, VIETNAMESE YOUTH WILL REMAIN SILENT OR WILL ALSO AGITATE FOR POLITICAL CHANGE. END SUMMARY.

NGUYEN THANH GIANG: AN INTELLECTUAL WITH AN EDGE

12. (C) POLCOUNS AND POLOFF CALLED ON NGUYEN THANH GIANG AUGUST 2 AT HIS HOME IN HANOI. HIS AMCIT FATHER WAS ALSO PRESENT. GIANG, A 64-YEAR OLD RETIRED GEOPHYSICIST, WAS ARRESTED IN MARCH 1999 AND DETAINED FOR TWO MONTHS FOR WRITING ARTICLES CRITICAL OF THE REGIME AND CALLING FOR DEMOCRACY AND A FREE MARKET ECONOMY FOR VIETNAM. GIANG SAID HE CONTINUES TO BE WATCHED INTERMITTENTLY BY POLICE AND SUBJECT TO TRAVEL AND OTHER RESTRICTIONS. HIS HOME PHONE HAS BEEN CUT OFF FOR MORE THAN A YEAR, PREVENTING HIM FROM BEING ABLE TO CORRESPOND BY EMAIL FROM HOME. HE USES

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HIS HOME COMPUTER TO WRITE ARTICLES AND CORRESPONDENCE (A PREVIOUS ONE WAS CONFISCATED BY POLICE LAST YEAR DURING QUESTIONING). HE SENDS AND RECEIVES EMAILS THROUGH A HOTMAIL ACCOUNT VIA FRIENDS' PC'S. (NOTE: VIETNAMESE DISSIDENTS AND OTHERS FAVOR HOTMAIL SINCE IT REPORTEDLY IS DIFFICULT FOR THE AUTHORITIES TO MONITOR. END NOTE.) AFTER HIS PHONE LINE WAS CUT, GIANG BOUGHT A CELL PHONE WITH WHICH HE KEEPS IN ACTIVE CONTACT WITH FRIENDS AND FELLOW DISSIDENTS. GIANG ADDED THAT HIS MAIL CONTINUES TO BE INTERCEPTED. THAT WHICH ARRIVES USUALLY SHOWS BLATANT SIGNS OF HAVING BEEN OPENED.

13. (C) GIANG NOTED SOME OF THE RESTRICTIONS ON HIM HAVE LESSENERED IN THE PAST MONTHS. HE HAS NOT BEEN CALLED IN FOR FORMAL QUESTIONING SINCE MARCH (A FULL YEAR AFTER POLICE ARRESTED HIM AND LAUNCHED A FORMAL INVESTIGATION). GIANG GLEEFULLY DESCRIBED TO POLOFFS HOW HE QUARRELED WITH HIS INTERROGATORS, AND SOMETIMES REFUSED TO RESPOND TO SUMMONSES. HE SAID THE POLICE HAVE TOLD HIM THEY HAVE HALTED THEIR INVESTIGATION. IRONICALLY, GIANG SAID, ACCORDING TO VIETNAMESE LAW, AFTER ONE YEAR, THE POLICE MUST CEASE AN INVESTIGATION ON A SUSPECT IF THEY TURN UP INADEQUATE EVIDENCE WITH WHICH TO PRESS FORMAL CHARGES. (COMMENT: HE STATED THIS MATTER-OF-FACTLY, CLEARLY ACCEPTING AS BINDING LEGAL LIMITATIONS ON POLICE INVESTIGATIVE PRACTICES. AS NOTED IN REF B ON THE CRIMINAL CODE, THIS IS AN ENCOURAGING SIGN OF A SLOW DEVELOPMENT OF RULE OF LAW FOLLOWING ON THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY'S RECENT PASSING OF NEW REVISIONS TO THIS CODE. END COMMENT.)

14. (C) GIANG SAID HE HAS FACED NO REPRISALS SINCE SIGNING A LETTER IN MAY CRITICIZING THE GVN'S ARREST AND SUBSEQUENT HOUSE DETENTION OF DISSIDENT SCIENTIST HA SY PHU IN DALAT (REF A). HE ADDED THAT THE OTHER FIVE CO-SIGNERS, THUS FAR, HAVE ALSO NOT EXPERIENCED REPRISALS. AMONG THEM, HE MENTIONED SPECIFICALLY HOANG MINH CHINH, A HERO OF DIEN BIEN PHU AND FORMER CPV OFFICIAL, WHOM HE VISITS OCCASIONALLY IN HANOI.

15. (C) GIANG SAID SECURITY FORCES DO NOT "ACT CLEARLY" AGAINST HIM. RATHER, THEY SEEK TO ISOLATE AND ALIENATE HIM AND OTHER DISSIDENTS THROUGH INTIMIDATION AND IMPOSITION OF A CLOUD OF ONGOING INVESTIGATION OVER THEM. IN HIS CASE,

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HIS FAMILY CAME UNDER PRESSURE. SHORTLY AFTER GIANG'S ARREST, HIS SON WAS FIRED FROM HIS JOB WITH THE STATE PETROLEUM INSTITUTE AND HIS DAUGHTER DISMISSED FROM HER POSITION IN THE MINISTRY OF LABOR AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS. HIS SON HAS SINCE FOUND WORK WITH A TECHNOLOGY COMPANY RUN BY A VIETNAMESE-AMERICAN, AND HIS DAUGHTER WITH A FOREIGN NGO. GIANG ADDED TO HIS LITANY OF COMPLAINTS FREQUENT POLICE PATROLS NEAR HIS HOUSE, WHICH DISCOURAGE FRIENDS AND ACQUAINTANCES FROM VISITING. (NOTE: THE WARD'S POLICE STATION IS TWO BLOCKS FROM GIANG'S HOUSE. END NOTE.)

16. (C) GIANG CONTINUES WRITING CRITICAL ESSAYS. HE PRESENTED US VIETNAMESE TEXTS OF SEVERAL ARTICLES HE HAS WRITTEN THIS YEAR, INCLUDING ON GLOBALIZATION AND DEMOCRATICIZATION, AND REFORM OF THE STATE ECONOMIC SECTOR. HE SAID HE IS A STRONG SUPPORTER OF VIETNAM'S SHIFTING TO A KNOWLEDGE-BASED ECONOMY. HE SAID HE WANTS TO CONVINCE THE COMMUNIST PARTY TO LET THIS PROCESS PROCEED. AS IN THE PAST, HE ADDRESSES HIS LETTERS TO SENIOR LEADERS, FROM GENERAL SECRETARY LE KHA PHIEU ON DOWN.

THE DISSIDENT NETWORK

17. (C) GIANG DESCRIBED AN ACTIVE DISSIDENT NETWORK, WHOSE MEMBERS FIND VARIOUS WAYS IN WHICH TO KEEP IN TOUCH IN THE FACE OF GOVERNMENT HARASSMENT. INTERMEDIARIES, CELL PHONES AND THE INTERNET ARE THE CHIEF MEANS OF MAINTAINING COMMUNICATIONS. THEY ARE ABLE TO VISIT EACH OTHER RELATIVELY EASILY, FAVORED CAFES BEING THE USUAL VENUE FOR MEETINGS. POLICE NONETHELESS SEEK TO BLOCK THESE LINES OF

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COMMUNICATIONS BY CUTTING PHONE LINES, INTERCEPTING MAIL

AND CONDUCTING OPEN SURVEILLANCE.

18. (C) GIANG VISITS LEADING DISSIDENT, GEN. TRAN DO, A 76-YEAR OLD WAR HERO AND FORMER SENIOR CPV OFFICIAL WHO WAS EXPELLED FROM THE PARTY IN 1999, AT THE LATTER'S HOME RELATIVELY FREQUENTLY. TRAN DO COMPLETED HIS LATEST ESSAY IN LATE JULY, REVIEWING A "FAMOUS VIETNAMESE NOVEL" ABOUT THE LIFE OF A PRISONER. GIANG SAID TRAN DO RECEIVES "MANY VISITORS," MOSTLY "ORDINARY VIETNAMESE," AT HIS HOME IN DOWNTOWN HANOI. (NOTE: TRAN DO, THUS FAR, HAS BEEN KEPT STRICTLY OFF-LIMITS TO FOREIGNERS. AT SOME POINT, WE MAY BE ABLE TO VISIT HIM AS WELL. END NOTE.) GIANG SAID GEN. DO ALSO IS NO LONGER THE SUBJECT OF REGULAR POLICE INTERROGATIONS, AGAIN DUE TO THE TWELVE-MONTH LIMITATION ON POLICE INVESTIGATIONS. HE SAID HE OCCASIONALLY CONTACTS FELLOW DISSIDENT, NOVELIST DUONG THU HUONG (SEE PARA. 19). WHEN HE CALLS HER ON HIS CELL PHONE, HOWEVER, A RUSH OF STATIC INTERFERES, WHICH HE BLAMES ON GVN SECURITY MONITORS. GIANG SAID HE HAS SOME "COURAGEOUS" FRIENDS WHO VISIT HIM AT HOME, THOUGH OTHERS WILL NOT. GENERALLY, THOSE WHO VISIT ARE OLDER RETIREES, INCLUDING VETERANS AND OTHER FORMER PRISONERS. FRIENDS WHO CURRENTLY WORK FOR THE GOVERNMENT OR RELATED INSTITUTIONS DO NOT VISIT FOR FEAR OF OFFICIAL REPRISALS, HE SAID.

GIANG ON HUMAN RIGHTS TODAY AND TOMORROW

19. (C) WHEN ASKED HIS VIEWS ON HUMAN RIGHTS CONDITIONS IN VIETNAM TODAY, GIANG BRISTLED. THE AUTHORITIES CAN AND DO TRAMPLE ON CITIZENS' RIGHTS WITH IMPUNITY, HE SAID. HE CITED HIS OWN CASE. "WHERE DO THEY GET OFF CUTTING MY PHONELINE? I'M A FREE MAN," HE SAID. GIANG NOTED THIS WAS PART OF THE ONGOING OFFICIAL EFFORTS TO ISOLATE AND INTIMIDATE THOSE WHO CRITICIZE THE COMMUNIST PARTY.

110. (C) WE ASKED GIANG FOR HIS VIEWS OF VIETNAM'S FUTURE. HE REPLIED HE IS OPTIMISTIC IN THE LONG TERM. COMPARING VIETNAM'S DEVELOPMENT TO THAT OF CHINA'S, HE SAID THAT AS IN THAT COUNTRY, MOMENTUM WILL BUILD BEHIND A DEMOCRATIC MOVEMENT. WHAT HAPPENS IN THE PRC WILL HAVE AN IMPACT ON VIETNAM. HE CITED SPECIFICALLY CALLS AMONG MANY CHINESE FOR A MULTIPARTY SYSTEM. VIETNAMESE WATCH SUCH DEVELOPMENTS CLOSELY, GIANG SAID. HE APPLAUDED THE SIGNING OF THE U.S.-VIETNAM TRADE AGREEMENT AS AN EXTREMELY POSTIVE
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STEP WHICH WILL BRING IN ITS WAKE CATALYSTS FOR POSITIVE CHANGE, POLITICALLY AS WELL AS ECONOMICALLY. HE SAID HE FORESEES ACCELERATED STRUGGLE WITHIN THE CPV LEADERSHIP, ALREADY RACKED WITH STASIS AND DIVISION.

THICH QUANG DO: DISSIDENT BUDDHIST FACES ONGOING HARASSMENT

111. (C) IN A PHONE CONVERSATION WITH POLOFF ON JULY 28, THICH QUANG DO, A 71-YEAR OLD LEADER OF THE BANNED UNIFIED BUDDHIST CHURCH OF VIETNAM (UBCV) AND THRICE-NOMINATED NOBEL PRIZE CANDIDATE, REPORTED THAT HE CONTINUES TO FACE HARASSMENT BY THE POLICE. DO TOLD ASIAWEEK IN JUNE THAT "THEY (THE AUTHORITIES) WANT TO ISOLATE ME AS IF I WERE A CONTAGIOUS DISEASE." HE RARELY VENTURES OUTSIDE HIS PAGODA IN HCMC; WHEN HE DOES, IT IS MAINLY FOR PERIODIC MEDICAL CHECK-UPS. HE TOLD US HE HAD JUST RETURNED FROM THE HOSPITAL FOR A ROUTINE CHECK-UP FOR HIS HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE AND DIABETES.

112. (SBU) AMONG MEMBERS OF VIETNAM'S SMALL OUTSPOKEN DISSIDENT COMMUNITY, THICH QUANG DO IS PERHAPS THE MOST UNABASHEDLY CANDID OVER THE PHONE. HE TOLD US HE CONTINUES TO RECEIVE FREQUENT VISITORS AT HIS PAGODA, AND MAINTAINS ACTIVE CORRESPONDENCE WITH FELLOW MONKS OF THE UBCV. DO CONTINUES TO PRESS FOR LEGAL RECOGNITION OF HIS CHURCH AND SEEKS PERMISSION FOR FELLOW SENIOR MONK, THICH HUYEN QUANG, CURRENTLY RESTRICTED TO AN ISOLATED LOCALE IN QUANG NGAI PROVINCE, TO MOVE TO HCMC. HE CONTINUES TO WRITE LETTERS TO THE SRV LEADERSHIP CALLING FOR FREEDOM OF RELIGION. THESE ARE CIRCULATED GLOBALLY THROUGH THE UBCV'S OFFICE IN
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PARIS. SOME FIND THEIR WAY BACK TO VIETNAM VIA PRESS REPORTS, FOREIGN RADIO BROADCASTS AND THE INTERNET.

HEAVY HARASSMENT OF DR. QUE

113. (C) EMBASSY POLOFF CALLED ON DR. NGUYEN DAN QUE AT HIS HOME IN HCMC ON JULY 17. CG HCMC POLOFF MADE A FOLLOW-UP VISIT AUG. 28. QUE WAS RELEASED FROM PRISON IN 1998 AFTER SERVING EIGHT YEARS. HE HAS BEEN IN AND OUT OF JAIL SINCE 1978 FOR TAKING OPENLY CRITICAL POSITIONS OF THE COMMUNIST SYSTEM. HE REFUSED TO DEPART VIETNAM FOR THE U.S., ON WHICH THE GVN HAD INSISTED AS A CONDITION OF HIS LAST RELEASE.

14. (C) THE 58-YEAR OLD PHYSICIAN SAID HIS HEALTH HAS IMPROVED SINCE HE WAS TREATED EARLY IN THE YEAR FOR BLEEDING ULCERS. HE HAD A CHECK-UP AT A FOREIGN-RUN CLINIC IN HCMC JUST AFTER TET; AN AUSTRALIAN DOCTOR THERE PRESCRIBED A TWO-WEEK TREATMENT. HIS AMCIT BROTHER, ALSO A PHYSICIAN, SENDS HIM MEDICINES FROM THE U.S. HE HAS NOT EXPERIENCED BLEEDING FOR THE PAST THREE MONTHS, THOUGH HE SAYS IT IS A RECURRENT PROBLEM AND SOME PAIN LINGERS. (COMMENT: THE PRESSURES OF OFFICIAL HARASSMENT AND ISOLATION, AFTER A LONG PRISON TERM, HAVE TAKEN THEIR TOLL ON QUE. HE SEEMED VISIBLY MORE STRESSED AND NERVOUS (INCLUDING A FACIAL TIC) COMPARED WITH THE LAST TIME WE SAW HIM MONTHS AGO. END COMMENT.) HE TOLD POLOFF HE FACES A LOT OF "MENTAL PRESSURE" FROM POLICE. A COUPLE OF UNIFORMED POLICE PASS BY HIS HOUSE SEVERAL TIMES EACH DAY. HE SAID THEY ENTER HIS HOUSE TO QUESTION HIM AND INSPECT HIS COMPUTER AND PAPERS AT LEAST TWICE A MONTH. SOMETIMES THEY BANG ON THE DOOR. EMBOFF VISITED IN THE EVENING. QUE SAID THIS IS THE BEST TIME TO DO SO, SINCE THE POLICE ARE OFF DUTY THEN. HE SAID FRIENDS VISIT HIM IN THE EVENINGS.

15. (C) QUE SAID HIS MEDICAL COLLEAGUES ARE AFRAID TO TREAT HIM; POLICE INTIMIDATE HIS FRIENDS THROUGH QUESTIONING, WHICH DISCOURAGES MANY OF THEM FROM CONTACTING HIM. HIS WIFE IS QUESTIONED BY POLICE, AND SOMETIMES INTIMIDATED BY PHONE. THE OFFICIAL HARASSMENT HAS MADE HER LIFE EQUALLY AS DIFFICULT, HE SAID.

16. (C) QUE'S HOME PHONE AND INTERNET ACCESS WERE CUT OFF IN MAY AFTER HE FAXED A 100-PAGE DOCUMENT TO THE U.S. AND FRANCE. LIKE GIANG, HE DOES HIS WRITINGS ON HIS HOME PC
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AND COMMUNICATES BY CELL PHONE (HIS AMCIT BROTHER CALLED DURING POLOFF'S VISIT.) HE SAID HE HAS BEEN ABLE TO OBTAIN AN INTERNET ACCOUNT ON THREE OCCASIONS BRIEFLY THROUGH THE ASSISTANCE OF FRIENDS. SECURITY CADRE CUT THESE SERVICES, HOWEVER, SHORTLY AFTER START-UP. SIMILARLY, SECURITY OFFICIALS TERMINATED THE FIRST CELL PHONE ACCOUNT, WHEREUPON HE SIMPLY BOUGHT ANOTHER. IRONICALLY, HE SOMETIMES RECEIVES "WARNING CALLS" BY PHONE FROM POLICE, DEMANDING TO KNOW WHAT HE IS DOING, OR TELLING HIM TO "BE CAREFUL," AFTER WHICH THEY ABRUPTLY HANG UP.

17. (C) QUE SAID HE WANTS TO CONTINUE HIS READING AND WRITING, BUT HIS ACTIVITIES ARE LIMITED BY THE RESTRICTIONS PLACED ON HIM. HE TURNED OVER TO POLOFF ESSAYS CONTAINING HIS VIEWS ON THE U.S.-VIETNAM BILATERAL TRADE AGREEMENT AS WELL AS DETAILED INFORMATION ON POLITICAL PRISONERS (TO BE REPORTED SEPTEL).

18. (C) QUE MEETS SINGLY WITH SEVERAL YOUNG STUDENTS TO DISCUSS PRINCIPLES OF DEMOCRACY AND OTHER ISSUES. HE SAID, THROUGH THIS MEANS, HE WANTS TO TRAIN YOUNGER PEOPLE TO CARRY FORTH THE IDEAS THAT WILL ONE DAY BRING CHANGE TO VIETNAM. UNDER THEIR URGING, HE HAS BEGUN AN UNDERGROUND NEWSPAPER CALLED "TUONG LAI" ("THE FUTURE"). THE FIRST EDITION, ELEVEN PAGES LONG, ADDRESSES HUMAN RIGHTS, CPV POLICIES, YOUTH AND DEMOCRACY. AS OF OUR MEETING, HE HAD NOT YET DISTRIBUTED THE NEWSPAPER, NOR DID HE ELABORATE HOW HE MIGHT DO SO. QUE ADDED HE WOULD LIKE TO FORM A CHAPTER OF AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL. HE LAMENTED, HOWEVER, THAT WITHOUT REGULAR INTERNET ACCESS, HE IS GREATLY HAMPERED IN HIS EFFORTS.

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THE UNSINKABLE DUONG THU HUONG: SOCIALIST ANTI-HERO

19. (C) DUONG THU HUONG, LIKE GEN. TRAN DO, WAS A TRUSTED, DECORATED CADRE WHO SUBSEQUENTLY BECAME DISILLUSIONED AND CRITICAL OF THE REGIME. THE 53-YEAR OLD NOVELIST SERVED WITH DISTINCTION IN THE "AMERICAN" WAR AS A SUPPORT CADRE FROM 1968 UNTIL THE CONFLICT'S END. SHE WAS ALSO A CPV MEMER. IN THE YEARS AFTER THE WAR, HUONG BECAME REPELED BY WHAT SHE SAW AS CYNICISM, CORRUPTION AND YPOCRISY IN THE REGIME AND BEGAN TO WRITE ABOUT T. HER NOVELS, PARTICULARLY "PARADISE OF THE BLIND" AND "BEYOND ILLUSIONS," BECAME BEST-SELLERS INSIDE VIETNAM BEFORE BEING BANNED, AND ATTRACTED A SIZABLE FOLLOWING OUTSIDE THE COUNTRY. (NOTE: DESPITE THE OFFICIAL BAN ON HER WORKS, PHOTOCOPIES CIRCULATE WIDELY INSIDE VIETNAM TODAY. END NOTE.) HER OUTSPOKEN CRITICISM, HOWEVER, INCURRED REPEATED WARNINGS FROM THE PARTY. SHE WAS EXPELLED IN THE LATE 1980'S (SHE CAST THE TIEBREAKER VOTE IN HER PARTY CELL FOR HER OWN EXPULSION). IN 1991, SHE WAS ARRESTED AND SERVED UNDER A YEAR IN PRISON WITH NO FORMAL CHARGES LODGED. AN INCREASINGLY VOCAL CRITIC WITH A GROWING FOREIGN AUDIENCE, HUONG WAS PRESSURED TO EXILE HERSELF TO FRANCE, BUT REFUSED, SAYING, "I WANT TO STAY HERE TO INSULT THOSE IN POWER." SHE IS A RECIPIENT OF FRANCE'S HIGHEST LITERARY AWARD AND IS REGULARLY DEFENDED BY AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

AND INTERNATIONAL PEN.

120. (C) CPV HEROES-TURNED CRITICS, SUCH AS HUONG AND GEN. DO, ARE SEEN BY THE PARTY AS APOSTATES AND, AS A RESULT, INCUR ESPECIALLY STRONG REPRISALS. IN 1998, POLICE ENTERED HUONG'S HOME AND ABRUPTLY TERMINATED AN INTERVIEW SHE WAS CONDUCTING WITH A READER'S DIGEST REPORTER, WHO WAS THEN DEPORTED. READER'S DIGEST PUBLISHED THE INTERVIEW THAT YEAR. SECURITY AUTHORITIES THEN PUT HUONG UNDER INTENSE SURVEILLANCE. EMBOFFS HAD TO ABORT EFFORTS TO SEEK A MEETING WITH HER THAT YEAR VIA INTERMEDIARIES AFTER THE LATTER WERE THREATENED BY POLICE. SECURITY PERSONNEL EFFECTIVELY PUT HUONG UNDER HOUSE ARREST. THIS ENDED ABOUT A YEAR AGO.

121. (C) HUONG GAVE A LENGTHY TELEPHONE INTERVIEW IN JULY TO RADIO FREE ASIA. SHE PREDICTED IN THAT INTERVIEW THAT THE SRV'S COMMUNIST LEADERSHIP "WILL BE SWEEPED AWAY BY THE RIVER OF TIME." SHE SAID SHE HAS |HUONG SAID, "MY CONTACT WITH THE
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OUTSIDE WORLD IS VERY INTERMITTENT. SOME MAIL ARRIVES AND OTHER MAIL DOESN'T . . . I RECEIVED AN INVITATION (AFTER THE EVENT) FROM THE U.S. EMBASSY TO THEIR NATIONAL DAY EVENT. ENVELOPES ARE CUT OPEN AND RESEALED SLOPPILY." SHE SAID HER PHONE HAD BEEN RECONNECTED AFTER AN INTERVENTION BY THE GERMAN GOVERNMENT. HUONG SAID SHE REMAINS UNDAUNTED IN THE FACE OF SUCH MEASURES -- "I NO LONGER CARE FOR I HAVE KNOWN THEM SO WELL."

122. (C) POLCOUNS MET TWICE WITH DUONG THU HUONG RECENTLY. SHE REITERATED HER FIRM COMMITMENT TO FIGHT FOR A DEMOCRATIC SYSTEM THROUGH HER WRITINGS. SHE SAID THE AUTHORITIES ARE NO LONGER SURVEILLING HER CONSTANTLY, BUT SHE REPEATED THE PETTY HARASSMENT AND MONITORING MEASURES REPORTED IN THE RFA INTERVIEW. WHEN POLCOUNS ASKED IF SHE WERE CONCERNED ABOUT MEASURES THE AUTHORITIES MIGHT TAKE IN THE FUTURE, HUONG REPLIED SIMPLY, "I DON'T CARE. THEY'LL NEVER SHUT ME UP. I'VE TOLD THEM I'LL SPEAK OUT UNTIL THIS EVIL SYSTEM IS GONE OR I AM DEAD." TO UNDERSCORE HER DEFIANCE, SHE INVITED POLCOUNS TO VISIT HER AT HER HOME, SURE TO DRAW THE ATTENTION OF T HER. (NOTE: A FEW, ELDERLY, VIETNAMESE WRITERS AT A RECENT EMBASSY-SPONSORED SYMPOSIUM OPENLY ASSOCIATED WITH HUONG, WHILE MOST OF THE REST STEERED CLEAR OF HER. HUONG IS AN EFFERVESCENT WOMAN WITH AN INFECTIOUS SENSE OF HUMOR, PROBING MIND AND A DEEP WELL OF ENERGY.)

COMMENT: PROSPECTS FOR CHANGE. WHAT ABOUT THE YOUTH?

123. (C) OUR CONTACTS WITH DISSIDENTS REVEAL A GVN POLICY OF SEEKING TO ALIENATE AND ISOLATE VOCAL CRITICS, FIRST BY
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HEAVY MEASURES, FOLLOWED BY INTERMITTENT HARASSMENT -- EXCEPT IN THE CASE OF DR. QUE. THE LATTER'S UNCEASING INTIMIDATION MAY BE DUE, PARTLY, TO HIS REFUSAL TO LEAVE THE COUNTRY UPON RELEASE FROM PRISON; THE AUTHORITIES MAY BE KEEPING THE PRESSURE ON IN AN EFFORT TO GET HIM TO CHANGE HIS MIND. THE CASES OF GEOPHYSICIST GIANG AND CPV APOSTATES TRAN DO AND DUONG THU HUONG ARE IRONIC IN THAT THE AUTHORITIES APPEAR TO BE MORE OR LESS HONORING A PROVISION OF LAW THAT REQUIRES TERMINATION OF INVESTIGATION AND ACCOMPANYING MONITORING/HOUSE ARREST IF CHARGES ARE NOT BROUGHT WITHIN TWELVE MONTHS OF INITIAL DETENTION. REF B PROVIDES AN ANALYSIS OF THE ADMINISTRATIVE DETENTION DECREE, WHICH IS MOST OFTEN USED AGAINST POLITICAL AND RELIGIOUS DISSIDENTS. IT IS TOO EARLY TO CONCLUDE THAT THERE MAY BE A CRACK OF LIGHT IN THE DARK CLOUDS THAT BEAR ON OPEN CRITICS OF THE SRV. THE CASE OF HA SY PHU (REF A) CERTAINLY BODES ILL. FUTURE TREATMENT OF DISSIDENTS AND THE OUTCOME OF THIS YEAR'S PRISONER AMNESTIES MAY GIVE US CLUES. IT MUST BE NOTED, HOWEVER, THAT HANOI'S TREATMENT OF DISSIDENTS TODAY STANDS IN SHARP CONTRAST WITH THAT OF A FEW YEARS AGO, WHEN A LONG JAIL SENTENCE WAS A VIRTUAL CERTAINTY. THE SRV'S TREATMENT ALSO COMPARES FAVORABLY WITH OTHER COUNTRIES, SUCH AS CHINA.

124. (C) FINALLY, IN THIS POLITICALLY THWARTED SOCIETY IT IS EXCEEDINGLY DIFFICULT TO GAUGE THE SUPPORT OR EVEN AWARENESS THESE DISSIDENTS HAVE AMONG THE GENERAL POPULATION, PARTICULARLY AMONG THE INTELLIGENTSIA AND EDUCATED YOUTH. ON OCCASION, WRITERS DO EXPRESS PRIVATELY DEEP FRUSTRATIONS WITH GVN RESTRICTIONS ON THEIR WORK AND AN IMPATIENCE FOR CHANGE. IT IS NOTEWORTHY, HOWEVER, THAT THERE ARE FEW, IF ANY, DISSIDENTS WHO ARE IN THEIR 30'S OR YOUNGER. (THE AVERAGE AGE OF THOSE ADDRESSED IN THIS REPORT IS 64.) THIS CAN BE EXPLAINED, IN LARGE PART, TO A FEAR OF LOSING ONE'S LIVELIHOOD. RETIREES HAVE LESS AT STAKE. THE AGING VOCAL DISSIDENTS WITH WHOM WE ARE IN TOUCH UNIVERSALLY ATTRIBUTE YOUNGER PEOPLE'S SILENCE ON POLITICAL MATTERS TO THESE FACTORS. TODAY'S VIETNAM ALSO OFFERS GREATER ECONOMIC AND PROFESSIONAL OPPORTUNITIES TOWARD WHICH TO DEVOTE ONE'S TALENTS. AS SOCIAL CHANGES FOLLOW

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THE RAPID ECONOMIC GROWTH WHICH IS TRANSFORMING VIETNAMESE
SOCIETY, IT WILL BE INTERESTING TO SEE WHETHER VIETNAM'S
YOUTH WILL CONTINUE TO KEEP THEIR HEADS DOWN OR ONE DAY
WILL BEGIN TO RAISE THEIR VOICES ALSO FOR POLITICAL CHANGE.
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